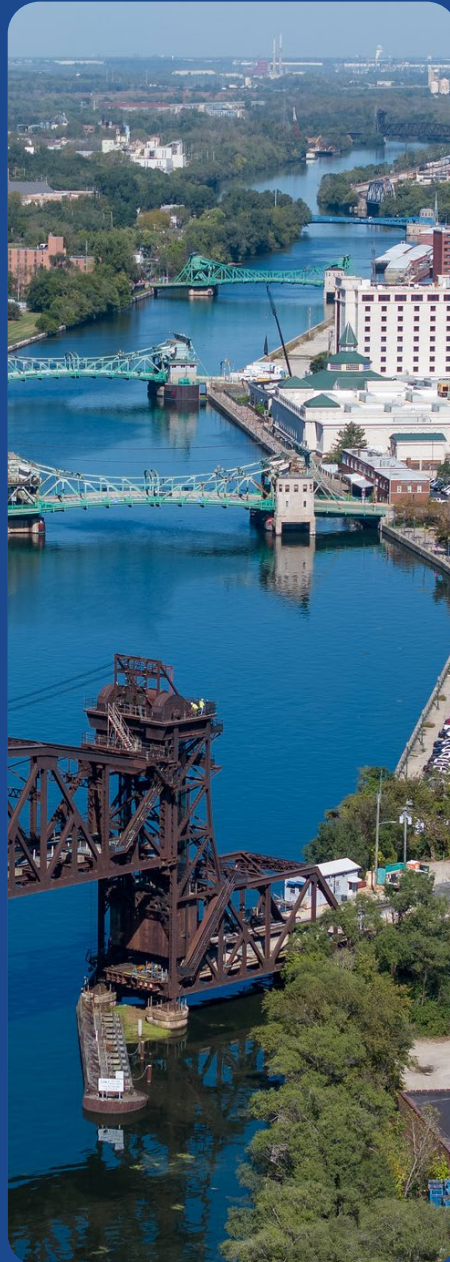




2025 – 2026

Northeastern Illinois Priority Investments

Leveraging federal funding opportunities
for transformative infrastructure



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

MESSAGE FROM THE CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AGENCY FOR PLANNING

Investing in northeastern Illinois' infrastructure builds local, regional, and national connections. As the third largest U.S. metropolitan area, our region is strategically located at the crossroads of the country and the global economy. We connect people and goods through our expansive rail network, major highways, international airports, world-class port, and more.

Our region is connected and united. Recognizing the transformative impact of federal investments, regional transportation partners collaborate to identify priority projects that make strong improvements for those who live, work, travel, and conduct business in northeastern Illinois. These projects will provide benefits beyond the region to the rest of the country and foster wide-reaching economic strength, efficient travel options, and multimodal accessibility.

Northeastern Illinois is an international transportation hub for people and goods. The region's robust travel options make connections for our nearly 8.6 million residents and the tens of millions of people who visit for business or tourism. Each year, \$3 trillion in goods move through the region by truck, rail, water, and air freight. As a legacy transportation system developed over the last 150 years, implementers are working to maintain this critical infrastructure while meeting current challenges with innovative solutions.

This booklet represents the highest-priority projects across the region in 2025 and 2026. It reflects collaboration between the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), Metra, Pace, the region's seven counties, and the CREATE Program partners.

With the support of federal funding, our region is empowered to further leverage our transportation system to achieve stronger, safer, and more efficient outcomes for all.

Sincerely,



Erin Aleman
Executive Director
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning



PRIORITY PROJECTS

Through decades of partnership and collaboration, the region has identified transportation projects with impactful, multimodal outcomes to achieve goals such as transit access, economic prosperity, and resilience. Federal funding for these projects has the potential to create reverberating impacts that improve conditions for communities both locally and nationally.

Transforming the region's transportation system

Northeastern Illinois is addressing transportation challenges head on with the support of federal funding. These priority projects will have transformative effects, making our transportation hub more resilient, inclusive, and accessible.



Chicago Hub Improvement Program

The [Chicago Hub Improvement Program](#) is a transformative investment in the future of passenger rail in the Midwest and beyond. Focused on modernizing critical rail infrastructure and revitalizing historic Chicago Union Station, CHIP will:

- Modernize Chicago Union Station to increase station capacity and enhance passenger flow, accessibility, and safety for all Amtrak and Metra passengers
- Take ownership of critical station infrastructure to increase safety, expand access, and provide fresh air within the trainshed
- Deliver faster and more reliable train service
- Improve operational efficiency by separating passenger and freight trains with additional trackage and connections
- Expand rolling stock maintenance and storage facilities to provide increased capacity, more efficient operations, and greater reliability
- Generate economic growth through job creation and business investment

As a national hub, Chicago plays a vital role in both long-distance and regional rail connections. However, the area's aging infrastructure has struggled to keep pace with rising demand, leading to bottlenecks, delays, and safety concerns. CHIP is strategically designed to tackle these challenges. By investing in critical infrastructure and facility improvements, CHIP will increase operational efficiency, enhance safety, and upgrade the overall passenger experience while meeting the anticipated demands of future generations.



The Chicago Hub Improvement Program is Amtrak's top National Network priority

Chicago Union Station impacts



3rd busiest passenger railroad terminal in the U.S.



3+ million Amtrak riders annually



30+ million Metra riders annually



400+ train movements each day



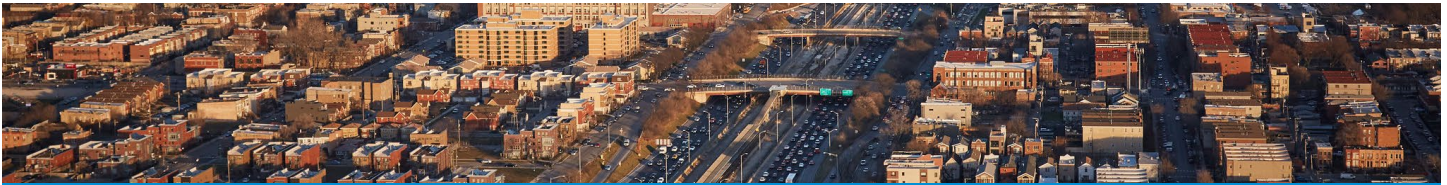
16 Amtrak intercity rail lines direct service from Chicago to 40 states and DC



6 Metra commuter rail lines



Chicago Union Station is a hub for current routes and additional services being studied under the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor ID program.



I-290 Blue Line Corridor Program

The I-290 Blue Line Corridor Program is a first-of-its-kind, multimodal priority project for the region that includes both the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway and the Forest Park Branch of the CTA Blue Line. The corridor plays a critical role in the region's mobility across all mode types, and investment in its infrastructure will strengthen economic, safety, resilience, and community benefits. As a reflection of the corridor's regional importance, IDOT, the CTA, and CMAP created a joint governance structure to develop and implement a unified corridor vision and an accompanying program of projects.

The I-290 corridor is one of the most congested expressways in the country, and requires modernization to improve travel times, increase safety, and repair aging infrastructure. The tracks along the CTA Blue Line Forest Park Branch, which have not been fully rehabilitated since they were originally constructed in 1958, require trains to operate under slow zone order for over 70 percent of its length. Numerous stations remain inaccessible. The branch needs to be modernized to meet the high demand for transit and multimodal travel.

This investment will reduce congestion, improve traffic flow and transit speeds, and make stations fully accessible. Improvements will also help advance economic growth, job access, and inclusion in areas that have historically been disconnected from economic opportunity, partially because the expressway itself is a barrier that separates neighborhoods. This program will also improve resilience by mitigating flood hazards and decreasing congestion-related emissions.

To achieve this transformation:

- **Accessibility, mobility, and safety improvements:** IDOT and CTA will continue to improve safety and mobility by bringing the corridor to a state of good repair and modernizing infrastructure for all travel modes. The CTA will increase access to transit by replacing track to address slow zones and reliability, adding ADA improvements, constructing a new traction power substation building, and making other customer experience improvements.

- **Maywood flood relief project:** IDOT is leading efforts to construct a relief sewer that will mitigate flood-related closures on I-290 as well as flooding in adjacent communities. This will be a partnership with the Village of Maywood, Cook County, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. This project will also include critical upgrades and safety improvements to the 1st Avenue interchange, with support from the National Infrastructure Project Assistance (Mega) Program.
- **Community connections:** The West Side I-290 Blue Line Corridor Plan will improve community safety, cohesion, and quality of life through enhanced connectivity in and around the corridor by bringing the benefits of transit-oriented development to disinvested and low-income neighborhoods.

I-290 Blue Line modernization impacts



\$2.7 billion in travel time savings



\$68 million increase in economic activity



6% reduction in vehicle crashes



90% reduction of slow zones on the CTA Blue Line

Project partners



This project is one of the most comprehensive multimodal improvements in the county. Partners include IDOT and the CTA, supported by CMAP and the [I-290 Blue Line Coalition](#).



75th Street Corridor Improvement Project

The [75th Street Corridor Improvement Project \(CIP\)](#), the largest in the [Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency \(CREATE\) Program](#), will deliver widespread economic and environmental benefits to:

- Advance national goals to support the country's supply chain, enhance passenger rail service, and improve conditions for disadvantaged communities
- Eliminate the most congested rail chokepoint in the Chicago terminal — the Belt Junction — where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross paths each day
- Increase passenger and freight rail efficiencies, improve service performance, and improve safety and traffic delays

The next critical phase of the 75th Street CIP is the Metra P2 Flyover. This project will provide significant benefits to the region and beyond by:

- Building on active construction efforts to separate one of the most congested rail junctions in the country
- Reducing crashes and auto-related injuries at the area's viaducts
- Restoring 14 grade-separated structures along the corridor, including bridges and viaducts
- Eliminating over 73,000 hours of combined delay for freight and passenger trains in the Chicago network over the next 30 years

CREATE project costs



\$5.8 billion for 70 projects. As of January 2025, 34 projects have been completed.

75th Street Corridor Improvement partners



The project partners include Amtrak, Metra, IDOT, Cook County, the City of Chicago, and Class I railroads. All of the 6 Class I railroads that operate in North America serve Chicago and are partners in the CREATE Program.



The Metra Rock Island Intercity Improvement project plays a significant role in Amtrak's Chicago Hub Improvement Program and the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project, enhancing multiple Amtrak and Metra routes.

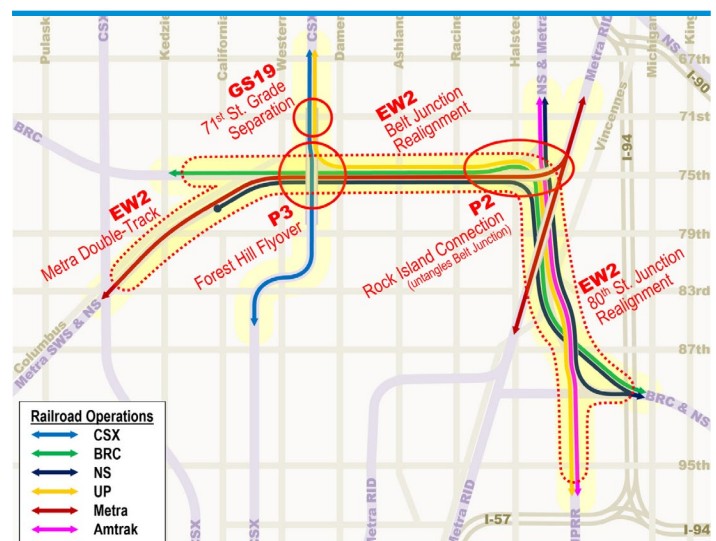
CREATE Program impacts



Modernizes a rail network that sees **500 freight trains** and **800 passenger and commuter trains** pass through every day. The national rail network depends on northeastern Illinois: 1 out of every 4 U.S. freight trains pass through Chicago.



Generates **\$31.5 billion** in economic benefits over 30 years.



The 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project's footprint.

Strengthening transit for an inclusive and resilient region

The region's transit system plays a central role in economic prosperity, resilience, and mobility. In 2023, the regional transit system provided more than 326 million passenger trips. As the region continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, more people are turning to transit to get to jobs, healthcare, education, social events, and more. To ensure that regional transit options are accessible and reliable for generations to come, transportation partners have prioritized projects that expand existing infrastructure and facilitate the transition to zero emission fleets.



Red Line Extension

The CTA's [Red Line Extension \(RLE\)](#) will extend the line 5.6 miles from the existing terminal at 95th/Dan Ryan to 130th Street and add 4 new fully accessible stations. The RLE will connect more than 100,000 residents to 25,000 additional jobs within a 45-minute commute. Over the life of the project, the RLE is estimated to deliver 12,500 direct construction jobs and approximately 60,000 indirect jobs.

Additional benefits to the region will include improved air quality, greater access to transit, and increased multimodal connections. The CTA is expected to break ground on the RLE in 2025.



Metra Green Fleet Initiative

In 2023, Metra [received funding](#) to procure 16 two-car [battery electric trainsets](#). Metra plans to introduce the trainsets on the Rock Island Line's Beverly Branch between the LaSalle Street and Blue Island stations, with the intention to expand the new electric fleet to high-ridership areas along other lines.

Metra is seeking additional funding to construct eight express charging docks as well as additional unpowered train cars to more regularly run the electric fleet and introduce it to more service areas. This initiative aligns with regional efforts to decarbonize transportation and increase transit ridership.



Southwest Division Garage Electrification

Pace's Southwest Division expansion and modernization will support the agency's strategic goals and the region's commitment to a greener future. These initiatives include modifying the facility to accommodate a phased transition to an all-electric fleet, as well as the Pulse 95th Street Line implementation and express bus services along I-294.

The Southwest Division will ultimately be able to house 65 electric buses under roof-mounted charging technology. Other improvements include expansion of bus storage, parts storage, and repair areas; removal and replacement of lifts; new loading docks; electrical upgrades; installation of charging infrastructure; and general facility improvements.



Metra Electric Line Bidirectional Signaling

Metra is collaborating with the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) to enable bidirectional signaling and upgrade existing control points on the Metra Electric Line between the Museum Campus and Kensington stations. Improvements will include rail, switches, signals, crossovers, wire, and additional work that will promote safety and efficient operations. Bidirectional signaling will also allow for more Metra Electric Line and NICTD trains to be scheduled, as well as more opportunities for express service.

TRANSFORMATIVE INVESTMENTS

Priority programs



Accessibility



Bridges and grade separations



Decarbonizing transportation



Bus priority

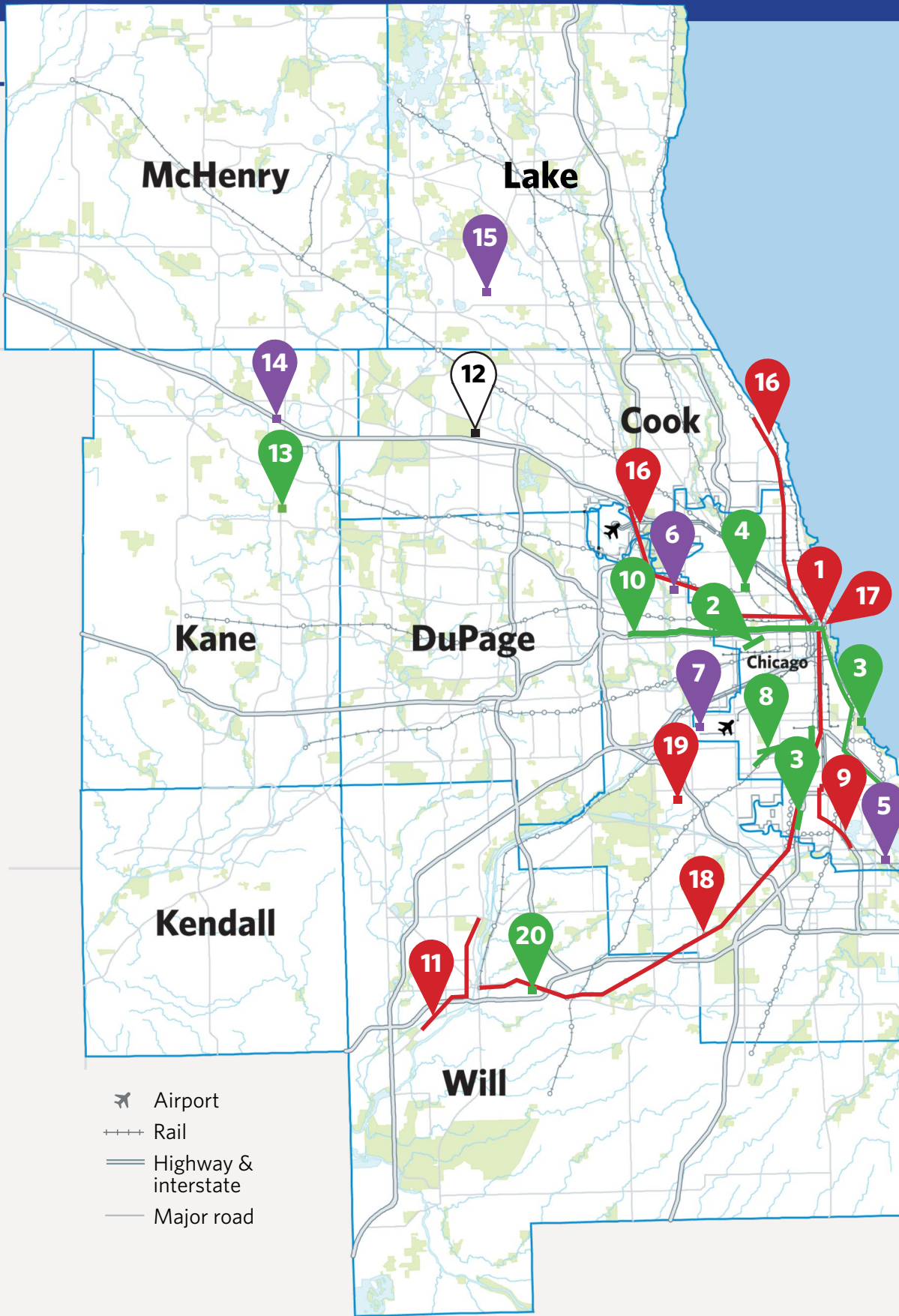


Safe Travel for All Roadmap



Greenways and trails

NOTE: Priority programs are implemented throughout the region and are not reflected as individual points on the map.

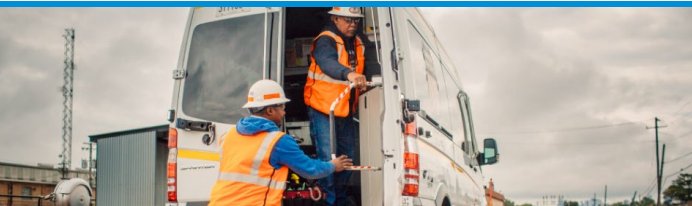


Priority projects

- 1 Chicago Hub Improvement Program**
Amtrak, IDOT, Michigan DOT, CDOT, Metra, Cook County
 - 2 Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project**
CDOT, IDOT
 - 3 Chicago Shoreline Protection Project**
CDOT
 - 4 Extending the 606**
Cook County, CDOT
 - 5 Burnham Avenue Railroad Crossing**
Cook County
 - 6 Grand Gateway Grade Separation**
Cook County, IDOT, Metra, Illinois Commerce Commission
 - 7 65th Street and Harlem Avenue Grade Separation**
CREATE, IDOT, CDOT, Cook County
 - 8 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project**
CREATE, IDOT, CDOT, Cook County, Metra
 - 9 Red Line Extension**
CTA
 - 10 I-290 Blue Line Modernization Program**
IDOT, CTA, CDOT
 - 11 Elwood to Braidwood Double Track Project**
IDOT
 - 12 Regionwide Arterial Traffic Management Center**
IDOT
 - 13 Randall Road at Hopps Road Intersection Improvements and Grade Separation**
Kane County
 - 14 Randall Road at I-90**
Kane County
 - 15 Old McHenry Crossing**
Lake County
 - 16 Metra Green Fleet Initiative**
MDW: CUS to O'Hare; UPN: OTC to Winnetka; RI-Bev. Branch
Metra
 - 17 Metra Electra Bi-Directional Signal**
Metra Electric: Millennium to Kensington/115th Street
Metra, NICTD
 - 18 Rock Island Intercity Improvements (R13)**
Metra, Amtrak
 - 19 Pace SW Division Garage Electrification**
Pace
 - 20 Gougar Road Improvements**
Will County
- Corridor improvements
● Transit / passenger rail
● Priority grade crossings
○ Regionwide
- Note: Alphabetical by sponsor, not ranked by priority

Investing in the region's passenger and freight rail

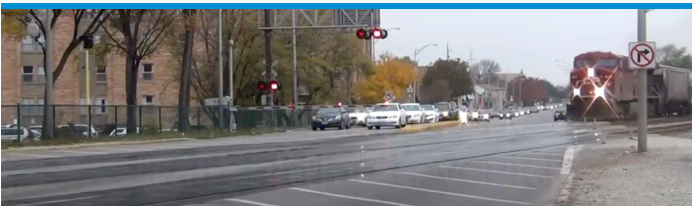
The rail system is one of northeastern Illinois' most critical assets that improves air quality, allows travelers to avoid congested highways, and connects people to jobs, education, entertainment, and other amenities. Additionally, the rail system provides critical freight infrastructure — connecting industries, promoting economic development, and supporting supply chains. Federal funding opportunities for the region are targeted at projects that enhance operational capabilities and help serve new ridership patterns. Priority projects include bridges, signal systems, tracks, interlockings, and other vital improvements.



Rock Island Intercity Improvement

The Rock Island Intercity Improvement (RI3) project includes construction of an additional main line on Metra's Rock Island Line, expansion and improvements to the 47th Street Yard, platform improvements at Joliet, and signal modernization with grade crossing and interlocking improvements along the line. The project will support re-routing Amtrak service and Metra Southwest service onto the Rock Island Line — as well as improving on-time performance, reliability, and capacity for intercity and commuter rail operations.

Along with CREATE's 75th Street CIP rail-rail flyover and Amtrak's Chicago Hub Improvement Program, RI3 will reduce congestion and freight conflicts.



Grand Gateway Project

More than decade ago, the National Transportation Safety Board identified the at-grade rail crossing at Grand Avenue and the Metra in Elmwood Park as inherently dangerous, and recommended a grade separation to improve safety where more than 25,000 vehicles and 128 passenger and freight trains pass daily.

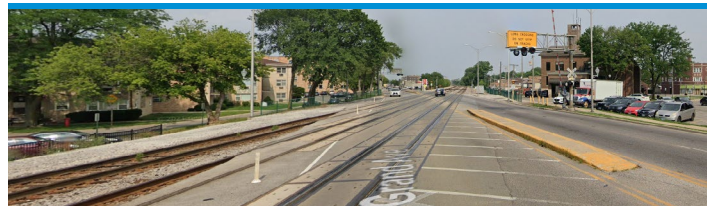
[The Grand Gateway Project](#) — a partnership between IDOT, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways, Metra, and Elmwood Park — is committed to resolving safety, access, and mobility issues at this crossing, while reinvigorating the surrounding central business district.



Elwood to Braidwood Double Track Project

The Elwood to Braidwood Double Track Project will include construction of a second main track in IDOT's high-speed rail corridor between Chicago and St. Louis. Additional project work will include a new maintenance facility, grade crossing enhancements, railroad signal updates, bridge improvements, and fencing to improve safety and reduce trespass risks.

Anticipated project benefits will include more efficient operations and faster travel times for both freight and passenger trains. This project and the RI3 project will complement one another to improve speed and reliability in the same intercity passenger rail corridor.



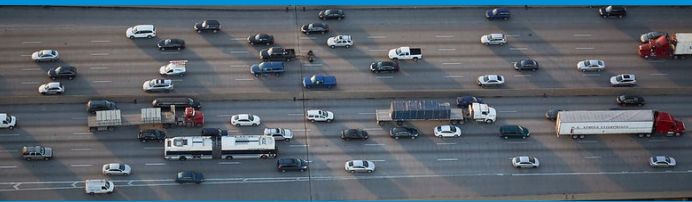
65th Street and Harlem Avenue Grade Separation

Each day, 9,850 vehicles and 185 CTA and Pace buses pass through the 65th Street crossing, while another 17,500 vehicles pass through the adjacent intersection on Harlem Avenue at 63rd Street. These grade crossings are near the Belt Railway Company of Chicago's Clearing Yard, which dispatches more than 8,400 railcars daily.

[The 65th Street and Harlem Avenue Grade Separation project](#) will construct an overpass, enhance multimodal facilities, and advance community and economic development goals by improving safety, air quality, emergency response times, and transit reliability.

Investing in multimodal connections and innovative technology

ON TO 2050, the region's comprehensive plan, calls for a well-integrated, multimodal transportation system that can seamlessly move people and goods within and through the seven counties of northeastern Illinois. The following priority projects aim to reduce congestion, improve safety, and enhance overall mobility for all users.



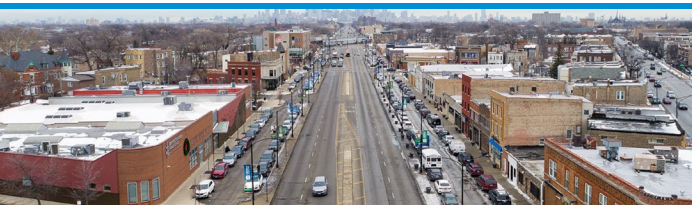
Regional Arterial Traffic Management Center

As a high priority for the state and counties, IDOT is advancing a new regional traffic management center (TMC) that will improve safety and mobility by optimizing existing resources, increasing operational coordination and resource sharing, and introducing innovative improvements to the system while expanding service. A TMC study will also consider a new Advanced Traffic Management System, which is a network of technology that communicates information about traffic flow and safety.



Randall Road at I-90

The Randall Road at I-90 portion of the Randall Road Corridor Improvement Project (from Big Timber Road on the south to Illinois Route 72 on the north) will redesign the interchange with a new southbound Randall to eastbound I-90 ramp. It also includes modified exit ramps, safety enhancements, improved signal timings at intersections, additional lanes from Big Timber Road and Illinois Route 72, and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.



Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project

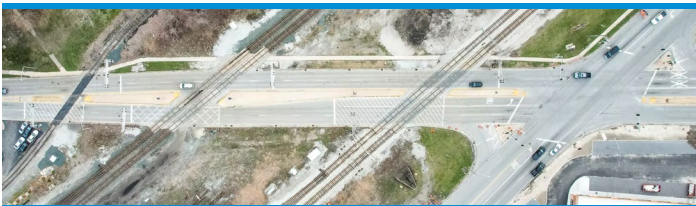
The [Ogden Avenue Corridor Improvements Project](#) will reimagine Ogden Avenue as a multimodal transportation corridor, a hub for community activity, and a catalyst for economic development. The project will improve safety for all users, repurpose and activate public spaces, and transform the corridor to deliver economic and community development goals.



Gougar Road Improvements

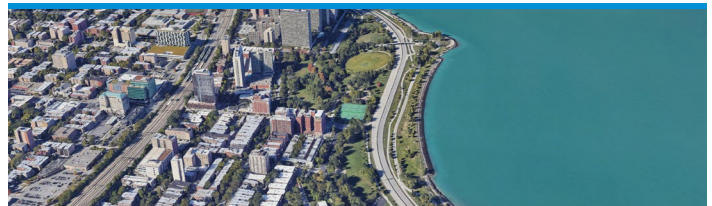
Gougar Road is a rural two-lane truck route with multiple at-grade crossings. Planned improvements will create two lanes in each direction, a barrier median, pedestrian facilities, and grade separation of the Canadian National railroad crossing. Developments along Gougar Road — such as schools, businesses, parks, and residential homes — will benefit from these traffic and safety improvements.

Northeastern Illinois' expansive transportation system includes 29,989 miles of roads, 3,650 bridges, 7,200 miles of rail lines, 1,646 rail crossings, and 1,200+ bike trail miles.



Burnham Avenue Railroad Crossing

This study will focus on improving safety and mobility at the at-grade crossing near the intersection of Burnham Avenue and Brainard Avenue in the Village of Burnham, where Burnham Avenue intersects with five railroad tracks. There is an average of four hours of downed gate time daily at this location, resulting in safety, congestion, mobility, and environmental issues. This intersection has been identified as a [regional priority](#) for grade crossing improvements.



Chicago Shoreline Protection Project

South DuSable Lake Shore Drive is a critical piece of transportation infrastructure along one of the most vulnerable sections of the Lake Michigan shoreline. The Promontory Point and Morgan Shoal segments of shoreline are the last remaining in a series of 23 sections known as the Chicago Shoreline Protection Project. Completion of these segments will ensure South DuSable Lake Shore Drive and the adjoining trail network remain protected and operational for generations to come.



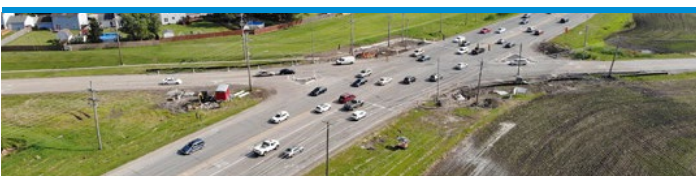
Extending the 606

The heavily-used 606 trail currently ends at Ashland Avenue, where bicyclists and pedestrians must navigate a complicated intersection and a challenging viaduct with poor sightlines to continue traveling east. A critical connection is needed to cross Ashland Avenue, the Kennedy Expressway, UPRR tracks, and Elston Avenue to join a further trail extension across and along the North Branch of the Chicago River that will be implemented separately through a redevelopment agreement.



Old McHenry Crossing

The Old McHenry Crossing project will improve safety and mobility for motorists, first responders, pedestrians, and bicyclists in an area where 4 highways — and approximately 25,000 vehicles daily — converge on an at-grade railroad crossing with approximately 20 freight trains daily. Improvements include a grade separation and a new sidewalk and bike path, increasing safety and traffic flow.



Randall Road at Hopps Road Intersection Improvements and Grade Separation

The Randall Road at Hopps Road intersection, realignment, and railroad crossing grade separation will improve safety, relieve congestion, and accommodate projected future traffic growth. The proposed project also improves the corridor's resiliency with a new drainage system and calls for a multi-use path that can close an existing gap for bicyclists and pedestrians.

PRIORITY PROGRAMS

Northeastern Illinois has focus areas to address longstanding transportation challenges and current gaps. These areas — called priority programs — are transportation project types that form an integral part of the region's strategic vision for the future.



Accessibility

Accessibility is vital to make northeastern Illinois more inclusive and thriving. Everyone in our region — including people with disabilities — needs options to get to work, visit family and friends, access goods and services, and enjoy all the region has to offer. Through initiatives such as the CTA's [All Stations Accessibility Program](#) and Metra's Accessibility Initiative, transportation implementers are working to advance projects that will make the region's transportation system accessible to all.



Bridges and grade separations

Northeastern Illinois' infrastructure is aging. Arterial, highway, and rail bridges throughout the region are in need of rehabilitation or replacement. With a significant portion of the region's bridges being more than 100 years old and an average age of over 50 years, more of these bridges require improvements each year. Transportation implementers in northeastern Illinois continue to seek funding opportunities for their expansive and growing capital needs to maintain bridges that provide local, regional, and statewide connections.



Bus priority

Transportation agencies across the region are working together to provide faster, more reliable transit that benefits everyone. Pace's [Bus-on-Shoulder](#) program supports congestion relief with routes on I-55, I-94, and I-90. As part of its Driving Innovation strategic vision plan, Pace also committed to expanding its [Pulse network](#) of arterial bus rapid transit to provide fast, frequent, and reliable bus service in heavily traveled corridors of the region. Another example is the [Bus Priority Zone](#) program, a partnership between the CTA and CDOT that targets pinch points along major bus routes that experience traffic congestion, insufficient space for bus boarding, or a bottlenecked intersection. Additionally, the CTA's [Bus Priority Corridor Study](#) will develop concepts for robust bus priority improvements in five corridors identified in the [Better Streets for Buses Plan](#), including a variety of potential street treatment options to facilitate a better bus riding experience and incorporate bus priority streetscape plans.





Decarbonizing transportation

Northeastern Illinois is committed to decreasing transportation emissions. Public transit agencies and local governments are seeking funding to invest in electric vehicles, locomotives, and fleets. State and regional transportation partners are also pursuing strategies to increase access to charging infrastructure. For example, IDOT continues to expand charging infrastructure throughout the state the [Electric Vehicle Deployment Plan](#). CTA, [Pace](#), and [Metra](#) have also advanced their transitions toward zero emission fleets, technology, and maintenance. As these transition efforts will continue over multiple years, transit agencies are working to increase ridership as a complementary strategy to reduce emissions.



Greenways and trails

More than 1,100 miles of trails and extensive on-street bikeways provide active connections across the region. Federal funding provides multiple opportunities to implement strategic initiatives, such as CMAP's [Northeastern Illinois Greenways and Trails Plan](#) and [Chicago's Citywide Vision for a Connected Network of Trails and Corridors](#). Through these efforts, the region is working to expand its network of trails and bikeways that provide community connections, travel opportunities, and accessibility throughout the region.



Safe Travel for All

Safe Travel for All is a regionwide initiative to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries in northeastern Illinois. County safety action plans are being developed by Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties. The project is funded by a Safe Streets and Roads for all federal grant, with additional funding from IDOT and county partners. Additionally, [Vision Zero Chicago](#) continues to work toward eliminating death and serious injury from traffic crashes.



Collaboration is a regional value

Thanks to the strong culture of collaboration among transportation partners, over the recent years the following projects have been awarded millions in federal and state funding.



All Stations Accessibility Program

- Makes progress on achieving universal accessibility at CTA stations
- Installs elevators and other improvements at previously inaccessible stations
- Modernizes station elements to improve rider experiences
- Improves Metra's 95th St. /Chicago State University and 59th-60th St./University of Chicago stations



Cedar Lake Road Realignment

- Increases efficient vehicular and train flow and promotes crossing safety
- Provides more travel options for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Advances opportunity for economic growth
- Relocates Metra's Round Lake station and enhances amenities



CREATE Program

- Increases the efficiency of our region's national freight hub
- Improves rail crossing safety throughout the freight network
- Supports collaboration between public and private partners
- Modernize Chicago's rail network to accommodate the region's freight and passenger needs



Harvey Intermodal Transportation Center

- Provides safer and easier transfers between Pace buses and Metra trains
- Expands customer service amenities and passenger experiences
- Increases ADA accessibility and paratransit opportunities



I-290 Blue Line Corridor

- Improves interstate traffic flow and increases transit speeds
- Modernizes stations through accessibility improvements
- Mitigates flooding impacts on roadways and in communities



UP-North Rebuild

- Replaces 120-year-old bridges and retaining walls that are critical to Metra's rail network
- Expands ADA accessibility and amenities for passengers
- Improves air quality and energy efficiency of rail operations



Randall Road Safety Improvements Projects

- Mitigates congestion and supports efficient traffic flow
- Improves intersection safety
- Adds pedestrian and bicycle accommodations



Red Line Extension

- Improves transit experiences and commute times for riders
- Increases residential connections to the CTA's bus and rail network
- Provides multimodal connections and fully accessible transit facilities

